



Making Life Easier
888-874-7290



Fitting It All In: How to Manage Your Time

REVIEWED JUN 19, 2007

Almost everyone has made an excuse to avoid a difficult task or important assignment. The standard lines include: "It can wait until tomorrow," "I work best under pressure," or "I still have plenty of time." Trying to manage a busy schedule can seem downright impossible at times. But avoidance and lack of organization can produce missed opportunities, anxiety and dissatisfaction at work and home. Practicing some common-sense time-management skills can help keep you on the right track.

"Lack of knowledge and skills is a major factor" in problems with time management, according to Tom G. Stevens, PhD, a psychologist with the Counseling and Psychological Services Center at California State University, Long Beach who has written extensively on the subject. "The other factors I believe are more caused by 'deeper' or 'higher-level' ingrained beliefs related to factors such as self-esteem, and more general self-control and self-discipline factors."

Listing objectives and prioritizing tasks in all areas of your life play the most important roles in overcoming those problems, experts say. "Values clarification, goal setting, prioritizing, having written lists, developing a regular schedule and developing habits that fit your goals are some key points," Dr. Stevens notes.

Prioritize

Start getting organized by listing your objectives, whether they involve meeting goals at work, finishing chores around the house or developing long-term career plans. Then prioritize related tasks and assign importance to each one. Make special note of high-importance tasks by keeping them at the top of the list or writing them in red ink.

Break more time-consuming or difficult tasks into manageable chunks. That can help build your tolerance to demanding jobs and boost your confidence when you cross one off the list. Don't sabotage your schedule by completing easier jobs and letting harder ones pile up—cleaning your desk won't produce that proposal due next week.

And remember that the most important tasks aren't necessarily work-related. Keep track of your goals at home as well.

Plan

Careful planning will help you meet your objectives. Keep a date book with space for a list of tasks each day. Make sure that your date book is within reach at all times.

Try to anticipate stressful deadlines and schedule extra time around those periods. If you work best at certain times of the day, pencil in more intimidating chores to coincide with your "performance peak." If a certain task can be done outside your office or house, carry it with you to work on when you have some spare time, such as on the subway or in the coffee shop.

Along with work, plan for time to relax and take care of yourself. Most importantly, give yourself a little freedom to be flexible, so you can choose between completing a task on your list or dealing with new jobs that may arise unexpectedly during the day.

Delegate

You can't do everything. Delegate as many tasks as possible to others and remember to follow up. Don't be afraid to tell someone you'll get back to him later, or to say "no" if asked to take on additional obligations.

As with any skill, learning effective time management takes practice. But you can take the first step by starting to recognize time-eating excuses and making an effort to curb procrastination.

By Kristen Knight

© 2001 Achieve Solutions

Making Life Easier: 888-874-7290

Achieve Solutions® is a ValueOptions® Web site.

<https://www.achievesolutions.net/achievesolutions/en/kcmle/>